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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 001100

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/WATERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/06/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [KDEM](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: CONFLICT CONTINUES BETWEEN FATAH FIELD COMMITTEES
AND ABU ALA'A

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY. In a June 6 meeting with PolChief, Fatah West Bank Field Committee Chairman Hussein al Sheikh said the head of Fatah's Office of Mobilization Ahmed Qurei (Abu Ala,a) is trying to restructure Fatah to consolidate his own power and undermine the Field Committees. Al Sheikh said he and his Gaza counterpart, Majed Abu Shamala, told PA President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) that Abu Ala'a's proposed structure could provoke violent clashes within Fatah. He said they threatened to resign and prevent Abu Ala'a's restructuring. Al Sheikh also said some Fatah Revolutionary Council (FRC) members discussed a conference that would replace a Sixth Fatah General Conference. Al Sheikh said he will argue against this effort at June 8-9 FRC meetings and use the issue to create alliances among grassroots Fatah leaders. Al Sheikh expressed concern over &increasing interference8 by the National Democratic Institute (NDI).
END SUMMARY.

ABU ALA,A,S EMPIRE-BUILDING

12. (C) In a June 6 meeting, Fatah West Bank Field Committee Chairman Hussein al Sheikh presented ConGen PolChief with a new Fatah organizational chart developed by Abu Ala,a &to serve his own interests.8 Al Sheikh pointed out that the new structure eliminates the Field Committees, ignores Abu Mazen as party leader, and elevates Abu Ala,a as Fatah's General Commissioner, controlling all military and financial entities. Al Sheikh said the proposed structure does not relate to the Fatah Central Committee (FCC) or Fatah Revolutionary Council (FRC), and he anticipates opposition from many FCC members, including Nabil Sha,ath, Hakim Bellawi, and Rawhi Fattouh, not out of support for the Field Committees, but rather personal motivations. The structure is more appropriate for a bureaucracy than a movement and will not facilitate internal party elections, Al Sheikh concluded.

ABU MAZEN,S RESPONSE

13. (C) After repeated, unproductive meetings with Abu Ala,a to reach a modus vivendi, al Sheikh said he and his Gaza counterpart Majed Abu Shamala told Abu Mazen they will resign and block implementation of Abu Ala,a,s plans, which they believe could lead to violent clashes within Fatah. Asked how Abu Mazen will resolve the overlapping mandates and continuing quarrels, Al Sheikh expressed dissatisfaction with Abu Mazen,s indecision and added that all the Fatah Secretaries-General join his opposition to Abu Ala'a.

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FRC PLANS TO BLOCK GENERAL CONFERENCE

14. (C) Al Sheikh said some FRC members convened unofficially at Othman Abu Gharbiya's residence to discuss a mini-conference of appointed, not elected, delegates.

(Note: The Fatah charter includes this option, which has been dismissed until now. End Note.) He said the resulting body would circumvent plans for a Sixth Fatah General Conference, and he will condemn it at the June 8-9 FRC meetings. He said he wants to make public this rump FRC effort, because he believes the public will see the FRC is not serious about a General Congress, and he can use the issue to create alliances among grassroots Fatah leaders.

USG ASSISTANCE TO FATAH

15. (C) Al Sheikh criticized what he described as increasing attempts by NDI to mediate between himself and Abu Ala'a and commented that NDI is working beyond its technical training mandate and embarrassing him. Al Sheikh said he recommended that NDI remove itself from this conflict, as its efforts exacerbate the disunity and hurt him politically, because of his assistance agreement with NDI. Al Sheikh threatened to withdraw West Bank Field Committee members from NDI trainings. ConGen PolChief asked him to take no such steps and to continue work with NDI. (Note: ConGen is following up on these concerns with NDI staff. End Note.)

16. (C) Asked about Abu Gharbiya's May 26 article urging Fatah to return its roots and end foreign, namely U.S. and European, interference, al Sheikh dismissed the accusations as coming from someone with no grassroots support.

CREATING PRESSURE FOR REFORM

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17. (C) Al Sheikh said holding the fifth round of municipal elections might help energize Fatah and could be a good experiment, since municipal elections are less critical than PLC elections. If undertaken, the elections must be phased deliberately to minimize Fatah's risk if it loses in places, al Sheikh cautioned. He noted that Hamas might not support holding the fifth round.

WALLES